HERPETOLOGICAL NOTES.

By H. A. Longman.

BOIDAE.

(Plate XIV.)

CHONDROPYTHON VIRIDIS (Schlegel).

A specimen of this well-known Papuan species was received from the Claudie Goldfield, Cape York Peninsula, in October, 1936, from Mr. S. H. Boyd, through Mr. C. Ogilvie. It was approximately five feet in length (coiled). Dr. Donald F. Thomson, who has done excellent work on our northern snakes, recorded this addition to the Australian fauna the previous year, with notes on its habits.[1]

MORELIA SPILOTES VARIEGATA (Gray).

In the course of an important paper on Australian specimens collected for the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, Mr. Arthur Loveridge has resurrected the Linnean species *argus* for our common and very variable Carpet Snake.[2] As this species is based on Seba's figure showing a snake with large shields on the head, it is not surprising that Boulenger rejected it, especially as the locality was thought to be Africa.[3] Apart from the doubt as to whether our snake was ever available for Seba to illustrate, the presence of large head shields makes it difficult to associate the Carpet Snake with this possibly composite and hypothetical species. Mr. Loveridge follows Dr. Olive Stull, who is revising the Boidae,[4] in reviving the genus *Morelia* and the Linnean species *argus*.

It may here be appropriately recorded that in Queensland the common coastal form, extending to several islands, is *variegata* and not *spilotes*.

ASPIDITES MELANOCEPHALUS (Krefft.)

(Plate XIV, Fig. 1.)

Three living specimens of this interesting snake were received from Mr. H. Muller, Beresford Station, near Clermont, Central Queensland, in May last. The largest snake was seven feet in length, and this is illustrated on Plate XIV, fig. 1. These are the first living specimens to be received here. Although easily handled and somewhat sluggish, the Black-headed Rock Snake presents a formidable appearance when irritated, especially when the fore part of the body is sinuously curved

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[1] Thomson D. F. P.Z.S., 1935, p. 724. Plates 1 & 11.

[2] Loveridge, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., Vol. LXXVII, 1934, p. 269.

[3] Boulenger, Catal. Snakes Brit. Mus., 1, 1893, p. 82.

[4] Stull, Olive Griffith. Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., Vol. 40, 1935, p. 395.

for a strike. The neck region may be distinctly distended (flattened). In some districts these snakes are regarded as dangerous, and have been called "Tigers." The darker bands on the brown body, which are very noticeable in some specimens, probably suggested this misnomer. Because of its striking colouration, this Black-headed Rock Snake has been called "The Tarpot" in some western Queensland districts.

Notwithstanding variation in certain of the head scales, Waite accepted Macleay's *Aspidites ramsayi*[5] as a distinct species, but Loveridge prefers sub-species.

A very robust specimen of *A. ramsayi* from Yeulba, received from Mr. J. P. Bennett, is 207 centimetres in length. This is the "woma" of Cooper's Creek Aborigines. In comparison with our specimens of *A. melanocephalus* this snake has a more massive head.

In the widely branched structure of the postorbital (postfrontal of Boulenger) at its junction with the parietal and frontal elements the skull of *A. melanocephalus* resembles *Nardoana boa*.

COLUBRIDAE.

BOIGA FUSCA (Gray).

(Plate XIV, Fig. 2.)

Opportunity is taken to give an illustration of a Queensland Museum specimen of the Brown Tree Snake in a characteristically bellicose attitude.

This snake is fairly common in south-eastern Queensland, and is sometimes called the "Night Tiger."

DEMANSIA TEXTILIS Dum & Bibr.

The variation in colour in the common Brown Snake is illustrated by specimens sent from Mackay by Mr. F. H. Stevens (J. 5629 & 5678). These are very dark brown and were thought by some to be "a hybrid between the Brown and Black Snakes." These Brown Snakes are strikingly marked in life with bright red spots on the ventral surface, but these quickly fade in spirits. Another specimen sent by Mr. G. Y. Harding, from Nambour (J. 6054) is an olive form, the bright red belly spots being very prominent when first received.

VERMICELLA ANNULATA (Gray).

As the result of Dr. L. D. Brongersma's researches, as recorded in his "Contributions to Indo-Australian Herpetology," Leyden, 1934, p. 223, the genus *Furina* is necessarily replaced by *Vermicella* Gunther, 1858. The species previously known as

[5] Waite, E. R. Trans. & Proc. Roy. Soc. S. Aus., Vol. XLI, 1917, p. 436. and Rec. South Aus. Mus., Vol. III, 1925, p. 24, with illustrations.

Pseudelaps diadema is apparently the type of Dumeril's *Furina*. *Vermicella annulata* is a common snake in the Brisbane district. The extraordinary habits of this snake in holding folds of its body vertically upwards have been twice illustrated.[7, 8]

In the synopsis of genera of Gunther's Catalogue of British Museum Colubrine snakes, p. 210, the generic name appears as " Vermicalla " ; although this has page precedence it is an obvious misprint for Gray's manuscript name as adopted by Gunther on p. 236 and repeated in later publications.

Dr. Brongersma (*loc. cit*) also points out that the well-known generic name *Pseudelaps* Fitz., must also lapse, being replaced by *Aspidomorphus* Fitz. The type of Fitzinger's *Pseudelaps* was *Elaps furcatus*. Curiously enough Fitzinger had used in 1826 *Pseudoelaps* for *Coluber getulus* L., a North American Snake.

ACANTHOPHIS ANTARCTICUS (Shaw).

In captivity this snake has the habit of lying in sand, which may partly cover it, with the tail curved around to within a few inches of the head. Slight movements may sometimes be seen in the posterior region of the tail and the spine when in this position, and it was noted many years ago that this acted as a lure for small birds which may peck at the moving tail and are then captured by a very swift lateral strike. Birds had been found inside this otherwise very sluggish snake, a fact that puzzled me in earlier years. The actual spine terminating the tail is almost flaccid and has no penetrating power ; it could not possibly assist in locomotion.

The Death Adder is a widely distributed snake and is found in a variety of habitats. In February last, on a cold wet night, the writer was called out to despatch a specimen which was slowly moving across a garden path near a residence on Mount Roberts, south-eastern Queensland, at an elevation of nearly 3,000 feet. Fortunately this dangerous reptile is rare. A few years ago it was a notorious menace in some localities in areas closely infested with prickly pear, where it found a favourable environment. With the extraordinary clearance of the pear through the introduction of *Cactoblastis cactorum*, it is far less common to day. Valuable studies of this snake, with fine illustrations, appear in the Medical Journal of Australia for March 9, 1929, by N. Hamilton Fairley, and for August 24, 1929 by C. H. Kellaway and T. Eades.

SCINCIDAE.

RHODONA ALLANAE new species.

Body much elongated ; fore limbs absent ; hind limbs monodactyl, styliform ; tail as thick as body. Snout projecting ; rostral large. Nasals contiguous above with an extensive suture. Fronto-nasals forming a broad band between nasals

[7] Longman. Mem. Qld. Mus. Vol. VI, 1918, p. 42. Plate XV.

[8] Thomson Donald. Med. Journ. Aus., July 21, 1934, p. 28.

and frontal. Three supraoculars and five or six supraciliaries. Frontal as long as broad, almost as long as its distance from the end of the snout; pre-frontals small. Fronto-parietals distinct from the interparietal; parietals bordered by enlarged nuchals. Eye small; lower eyelid with a transparent disk. Six upper labials, fourth below eye. Ear-opening very tiny, scarcely discernible. Eighteen scales around the body, dorsals largest; preanals enlarged.

Fore limbs entirely absent, site indicated by a slight depression with a rosette of smaller scales. Hind limbs monodactyl, styliform; length almost equal to diameter of body; relatively longer in young specimens.

Colour (spirits): upper surface Ridgway's drab gray; scales mostly bordered with darker markings. On the back these dark spots form five almost continuous longitudinal lines. The scales on the sides, throat and lower surfaces are prettily marked with dark spots.

Described from three specimens, the largest of which is 144 mm. (tail partly regenerated); head and body 90. This specimen is selected as holotype, Reg. No. J. 6180.

These elongated skinks were sent in from Retro Station, Capella, central Queensland, by Mrs. P. C. Allan, who has presented many interesting specimens to the Queensland Museum, and after whom the new species is named.

Rhodona allanae is undoubtedly allied to *R. wilkinsi* from Torrens Creek, northern Queensland, described by Mr. H. W. Parker in 1926.[9] It is readily distinguished, however, by the monodactyl hind limb, by the presence of three labials in front of the eye and by the more elongated frontal. *R. picturatus* Fry from Boulder, West Australia, is another allied species.[10] From such species as *Rhodona bipes* and *miopus* it is easily separated by the distinct fronto-parietals, apart from other characters. In the evolution of these species there are interesting illustrations of variation and of convergence. Taking Dollo's "Law of the Irreversibility of Evolution" as substantially correct, one would expect to find greater variation in species with several digits than in monodactyl skinks. *R. allanae* seems one of the most specialised and is obviously adapted to subterranean life.

[9] Parker, H. W. Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. (8), Vol. 17, 1926, p. 667.

[10] Fry, D. B. Rec. W. A. Mus., Vol. I, p. 187, 1914.

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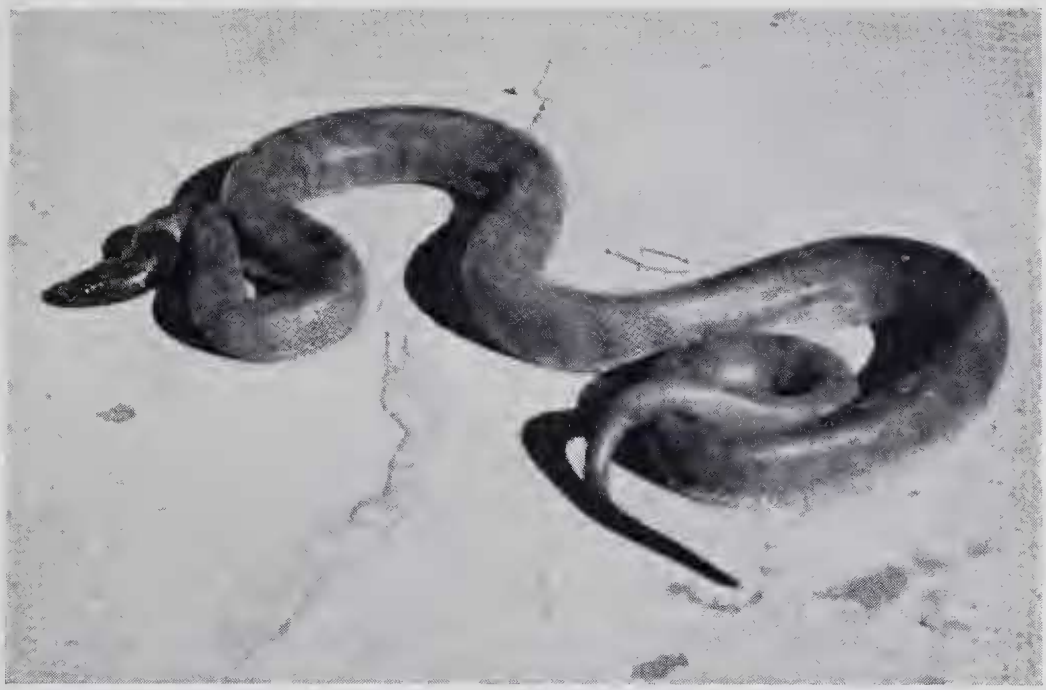

Fig. 1.—*Aspidites melanocephalus* (Krefft). From life.
Photo. : T. C. Marshall.

Fig. 2.—*Boiga fusca* (Gray). From life.
Courier-Mail Photograph.

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